

# Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

## Pre School

<b>TUSLA Identifier:</b>	TU2015LH018
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<b>Name of Service:</b>	Clever Clogs
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<b>Address of Service:</b>	Educate Together Primary School, Dunlin Street, Aston Village, Drogheda, Co. Louth
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<b>Eircode:</b>	A92 Y236
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<b>Name of Registered Provider:</b>	Barbara Rothwell
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<b>Service type:</b>	Full Day
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<b>Date of Inspection:</b>	15/01/2024
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<b>No of pre-school children:</b>	AM	27	PM	10
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<b>Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:</b>	Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6.
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<b>Inspection undertaken by:</b>	S. Taaffe
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<b>Title:</b>	Early Years Inspector
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### Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

<b>Conditions if applicable</b>	Not Applicable
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### Description of service

Clever Clogs in Educate Together Primary School is one of three early years services operated by the registered provider, all of which are located in Drogheda in Co. Louth. This full day care service is registered to accommodate a maximum of 44 pre-school children aged 2 – 6 years. The service is conducted from two classrooms positioned across from each other on opposite sides of a corridor on the first floor of a primary school which is located in a large residential housing estate on the outskirts of Drogheda town. An enclosed outdoor play area is provided near the entrance to the Early Years' service, which is used solely by the children attending the service. Eligible pre-school children are facilitated to avail of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme daily from 9.00am to 12.00midday. School age children are also accommodated in the service.

### Staffing

The registered provider does not work in the service, mainly engaging in administrative duties in a separate location, with an area manager employed to coordinate the day to day operational management of the three services. Six core staff members are employed in this service, all of whom hold a major award in early childhood care and education at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). One of these 6 staff members is employed as a supervisor who is the designated person in charge of the service in the absence of the area manager. Another of the 6 staff members who holds an appropriate childcare qualification mainly engages in catering and cleaning duties but is also available to support the children when required. A college student was present in the service on a work experience placement as part of a Level 5 Early Childhood Care and Education training course on the day of inspection. This student also works with the school age children in the service.

### Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well- being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance/ health, welfare and development of child/ safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11, 15, 19, 23, 25 and 26. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulation within this report.

A sampling process was used to assess compliance under regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

## Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the area manager, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

(7) A registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are appropriately supervised and provided with appropriate information and where necessary training, including in relation to the following:

- (a) the policies, procedures and statements of the service specified in Schedule 5;

#### Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service supervisor was the designated person in charge of the service and in her absence the area manager would deputise as required.

(b) The supervisor was present and in charge of the service when the inspector arrived unannounced at 9.40am on the morning of inspection. The area manager arrived shortly afterwards and remained on the premises for the duration of the inspection.

All staff files were reviewed. These consisted of a total of nine staff files which were maintained in respect of the registered provider, the area manager, the 6 core staff members, and the student on work placement working with the pre-school children and who also works with the school age children.

(2)(a)(b) There were 2 written, validated references available for the registered provider, the area manager, the 6 core staff members and the student.

(a) Fourteen written references were from past employers.

(b) Four written references were from sources other than a past employer.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures were available for the registered provider, the area manager, the 6 staff members and the student.

(d) Not applicable as following a review of the staff files there was no evidence that international police vetting was required for the registered provider, any member of staff or the student.

(4) The registered provider, the area manager and all 6 staff members held a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 - 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

(7) There were records available in the service which demonstrated that the area manager conducted staff supervision with all staff members at least twice a year to affirm or address practice issues and to support professional development plans.

### Part III – Management and Staff

#### Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

*(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.*

*(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-*

*(a) a registered provider of a pre-school service other than a child-minding service or a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that there are at least 2 adults on the premises at all times*

#### Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(2) The adult to child ratios were correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- In the Caterpillar Room there were 12 children (of whom 1 child was aged 2 years 10 months and the remaining 11 children were aged between 3 years 1 month and 3 years 11 months) being cared for by 3 staff members. One of the 3 staff members was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme.
- In the Butterfly Room there were 15 children aged between 3 years 11 months and 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members. One of the 2 staff members was employed to reduce the adult to child ratio, and to work directly with a child with additional needs, when necessary, as part of the Access and Inclusion Model scheme. A student undertaking a childcare qualification was also present in this room on a work experience placement, working with the children under supervision in a supernumerary capacity.

(8)(a) Based upon a review of the service's staff roster and staff sign in records it was evident that the registered provider ensured that there were at least 2 adults on the premises at all times.

## Part IV – Information and Records

### Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

*(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:*

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

### Compliance Information

(1) The registered provider ensured a record was kept in writing in relation to the children's details as outlined in Regulation 15 (a) to (i). Twelve children's registration forms were inspected, all of which were found to be appropriately completed with the required information.

### Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

#### Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

#### Compliance Information

The following examples demonstrate how each child's learning, development and well-being was observed being facilitated during the inspection:

#### Basic needs:

- The service was actively engaging with an early years specialist quality development service to enhance children's play and learning experiences and to obtain support in relation to meeting the children's individual and, for some, their additional needs.
- Breakfast was available for children to have in the service up until 8.45am if required, with cereal and toast provided. Children were observed eating healthy foods provided from home for the morning snack including a range of chopped fruit and vegetables, cheese, yogurts, sandwiches, wraps and plain rice cakes. Children attending the service on a part-time basis were offered the option to have a second snack after the ECCE session had ended and dinner was provided by the service at 1.00pm. The dinner menu on display included beef pasta Bolognese, meatballs, broccoli and mash, and vegetable curry and rice. A chicken and tomato pasta dish was served for dinner on the day of inspection and dietary requirements, as specified by the parents, were accommodated. The children's water bottles were accessible during the day, and these were placed beside the children on their tables when eating. The children were given sufficient time to relax and enjoy their meals with staff members observed sitting with and chatting with the children in a sociable manner during these times.
- The small number of children who wore nappies were changed regularly and in a timely manner when required. Children who were toilet trained were facilitated to use the toilet independently with discreet supervision and assistance provided by the staff members when required.

- Both pre-school rooms had established spaces where children could take a rest or a break from activities if required. Soft matting and cushions were provided in the Butterfly Room for this purpose. A section of the Caterpillar Room was partitioned off and surfaced in artificial grass, soft matting and cushions, with a number of stackable beds and bed linen available in storage on the premises to accommodate sleeping children in this area if required. No children were observed sleeping on the day of the inspection and the inspector was informed that generally children no longer avail of a daytime nap.
- All children engaged in outdoor play on the day of inspection, dressed appropriately for the cold weather conditions.

### Supporting relationships:

- The inspector observed the children to be familiar and comfortable with the staff members, seeking their guidance and assistance which was readily provided by the staff members in both rooms.
- The staff members were observed to be respectful and caring in their interactions with the children, using warm and responsive tones and facial expressions and signalling when interacting with children individually and in groups, to facilitate each child's inclusion and involvement in a caring and balanced way. In return, the children were given time and encouragement to communicate with the staff members both verbally and non-verbally and the staff members were observed responding in a positive and interested manner. For children who required additional supports, the inspector found there to be suitable care plans in place taking account of the children's abilities, needs, preferences and interests.
- The staff members seemed to know the children very well and demonstrated high quality interactions with them. For example, during the inspection, on several occasions when children became disengaged the staff members promptly recognised this and respectfully invited the children towards an alternative activity. The inspector observed the children in both rooms to be engaged in activities that were planned based on the children's interests or which the children had chosen themselves. Staff paid close attention to children's emerging interests and kept note of such information, on display in both care rooms, to consider when planning the curriculum of activities.
- The inspector observed that children's transitions were supported. Timers and verbal strategies including prompts and songs which the children were familiar with were used to inform and prepare children for up-coming activities and movement.

### Physical and material environment:

- A suitable variety of play materials and resources were available in both care rooms. Materials were accessible on low-level shelving to facilitate children's independent choice and play.
- Each care room had designated areas of interest including library/cosy corners, home corners, construction areas and art areas.
- Sensorial play experiences were facilitated for the children with tray-top activity tables containing dried pasta, lentils, peas and seeds provided and accessible to the children throughout the inspection and playdough activities facilitated during the day.
- Natural, wooden and ceramic materials were particularly evident and readily used in the service. For example, pasta, rice and seeds were stored in glass jars in the home corners whilst natural, open-ended materials including packaging, lengths of timber, tubing and pipes were provided in both rooms.
- Family photographs were on display which supported the children to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness in the service and bridged the gap between the service and home.
- An outdoor play area surfaced in artificial grass and hard surfacing was provided beside the designated entrance to the early years service. Play equipment in place included a large wooden climbing frame with standing platform, slide and slanted climbing ramp attached, balance beams, a wooden teepee, a lidded sand table, a wooden playhouse set up as a shop and seating for adults and children. A spacious wooden room enclosed with rigid plastic sheeting was also provided which was used as an outdoor classroom, equipped with child-sized tables and chairs and a range of art supplies and tabletop activities. The children attending the adjoining primary school did not access this outdoor play area as it is designated for use by the children attending the early years service only.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

*A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.*

#### Compliance Information

##### General Safety:

- Access to the early years service was gained through a designated entrance door on the ground floor leading to a stairwell in the primary school premises, specifically for use by the pre-school children, their parents or guardians and the early years staff only. The two pre-school classrooms were located at the top of the stairs with access to the rest of the corridor, staff toilets and school building restricted through the provision of an electronic numerical push-button locked door.
- A bell was provided at the secured door at the top of the stairs to allow parents or visitors notify staff members of their arrival to the service.
- The staircase was in good condition, had suitable handrails and was adequately lit to reduce the risk of falls or injury.
- The water temperature at the hot taps on the low-level sinks in both pre-school rooms and in the sanitary accommodation accessed directly from each pre-school room did not exceed the recommended maximum water temperature of 43°C. This reduced the risk of scalding for the pre-school children.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children.
- The kitchenette in the Butterfly Room was inaccessible to children through the provision of a sturdy wooden gated partition separating the two spaces.
- The outdoor play area was appropriately secured with gated fencing.

##### Infection Control:

- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.
- Up-to-date cleaning schedules were on display in the service.
- Children's snacks, supplied from home, were refrigerated on arrival to the service which reduced the risk of bacteria growth in perishable food items.
- Appropriate disposable gloves and aprons were available for nappy changing.
- Handwashing was carried out at the appropriate times by children and adults, for example, before eating, after using the toilet, following messy play and outdoor play and after attending to children's personal care needs. Warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to facilitate hand hygiene.
- The outdoor sand pit was fitted with a secure lid to prevent contamination by animals and birds.

## Administration of Medication:

- Medication was stored out of the reach of children. No children were observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

## Safe Sleep:

- Stackable beds were provided should a child wish to sleep in the service. The staff members were able to describe safe sleep practices.

## Part VI - Safety

### Regulation 25 - First aid

*(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*

*(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*

*(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*

*(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

## Compliance Information

(1) A person who held in-date First Aid Response (FAR) training was at all times immediately available to the children attending the service as the area manager and all 6 staff members held in-date FAR training certificates.

(2)(a)(b) A suitably equipped first aid box was available in both pre-school rooms and these were stored in accessible and conspicuous locations out of the reach of children.

### Part VI - Safety

#### Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-*
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and*
  - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.*
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.*

#### Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record was maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The records indicated and staff members reported that fire drills were carried out monthly. The last recorded fire drill took place on 12/12/2023.
- (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises. Fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 24/03/2023 and the smoke detection system maintenance certificate was dated 16/06/2023.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire was conspicuously displayed in the premises.